

## **Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Travel**

This guidance provides updated recommendations for safer travel during the COVID-19 pandemic and reflects CDC updates from 12/2/21 in response to the emergence of the COVID-19 Omicron variant. These recommendations will be updated as necessary as we learn more about the Omicron variant.

### **Definitions**

- **Close contact:** Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, starting from 2 days before illness onset (or for asymptomatic infected people, 2 days prior to positive test collection) until the time the infected person is isolated.<sup>1</sup>
- **Fully vaccinated:** In the setting of travel, a person is considered fully vaccinated:
  - 14 days after completion of:
    - A *primary* COVID-19 vaccine series<sup>2</sup> with a vaccine that has received approval or granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) **OR** a vaccine listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO). For a current list of accepted vaccines, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/proof-of-vaccination.html#noncitizen](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/proof-of-vaccination.html#noncitizen).
    - The full series of an active (not placebo) COVID-19 vaccine in the U.S based AstraZeneca or Novavax COVID-19 vaccine trials
    - 2 doses of any “mix-and-match” combination of accepted COVID-19 vaccines (see above) administered at least 17 days apart<sup>3</sup>

### **General travel information**

- The following categories of people **must not travel** due to the risk of exposing others:
  - People who are diagnosed with COVID-19 and in their isolation period, regardless of vaccination status
  - People experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
    - Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.
  - People who meet criteria to quarantine because they are close contacts of a person with COVID-19
    - People who are fully vaccinated or who tested positive for COVID-19 in the previous 90 days do not have to quarantine if they are exposed.
    - For more information, see *Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19: Quarantine and Testing* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).
- Fully vaccinated travelers and travelers who have tested positive for COVID-19 (with

<sup>1</sup> Exceptions to this definition may apply for Pre-K-12th grade and Adult Education students who were within 3 to 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 under strict conditions only. Details about this exception can be found in *Guidance for Schools* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

<sup>2</sup> After the second dose of a 2-dose series, or after one dose of a single-dose vaccine, before any extra (e.g., booster) doses

<sup>3</sup> A “mix-and-match” approach to the primary vaccine series is not currently recommended in the United States, but this definition reflects that this is acceptable practice in a growing number of other countries.

recovery) in the past 90 days are less likely to catch and spread COVID-19.

- If a person is immunocompromised<sup>4</sup> due to a medical condition or medications, they may not be fully protected even if they are fully vaccinated. Before traveling or resuming other leisure activities, they should discuss with their health care provider.
- **People of all ages are recommended to delay any non-essential travel until they are fully vaccinated.** People who are not fully vaccinated are at higher risk for catching and spreading COVID-19.
  - Examples of non-essential travel include vacations, school trips, youth sports tournaments or work conferences
- **All travelers, including those who are fully vaccinated,** must continue to wear face masks on public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States (e.g., on an airplane, train, bus, taxi, ride-share vehicle, or indoor areas of transportation hubs such as airports or train stations). Masks are not required in outdoor areas of a conveyance (e.g., open deck of a ferry or top deck of a double-decker bus).
- All travelers should wash hands often or use hand sanitizer.
  - avoid travel to high-risk countries.
- Travel related tests must be **viral tests**.
  - There are two main categories of viral tests:
    - NAAT (nucleic acid amplification test e.g., PCR) tests
    - Antigen tests
  - Wait until test is negative<sup>5</sup> before traveling.
  - If test is positive, isolate<sup>5</sup> and do not travel.

## International travel

- In response to the emergence of the Omicron variant, as of 12/6/21, a Presidential Proclamation issued November 26, 2021 prohibits travelers from certain African countries from entering the United States. For details, limited exemptions to this policy, and an up-to-date list of countries, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/from-other-countries.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/from-other-countries.html).

## AIR TRAVEL

The CDC has issued an amended order which tightens COVID-19 testing requirements for all air passengers to the United States, regardless of travelers' citizenship or vaccination status. The order took effect December 6, 2021.

### Requirements for all people travelling to the U.S by air<sup>6,7</sup>:

- Negative COVID-19 test: All people must show a negative COVID-19 test taken no sooner than **1 day** prior to the flight (Example: if flight is on Sunday, a test performed on

<sup>4</sup> **Immunocompromised** means having a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or from taking medications that suppress the immune system. This includes, but is not limited to: people on chemotherapy, people with blood cancers like leukemia, people who have had an organ transplant or stem cell transplant, and people on dialysis.

<sup>5</sup> A person who tests positive for COVID-19 should isolate for at least 10 days and after improvement of symptoms, including no fever for 24 hours. Please see the guidance document *People who Test Positive for COVID-19 and their Household Members* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance) for more details.

<sup>6</sup> This section summarizes the CDC's Amended Order. For full details of the order, see [cdc.gov/quarantine/fr-proof-negative-test.html](https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/fr-proof-negative-test.html).

<sup>7</sup> These requirements do not apply to children younger than age 2.

- Saturday is acceptable).
- **Attestation:** All people must complete an attestation that the information they are providing is true. This shall be submitted to the airline or aircraft operator.
- **Contact information:** All people must provide contact information to the airline for contact tracing purposes.
- People who have had COVID-19 (and recovered) within the past 90 days may provide documentation of this in lieu of getting a COVID-19 test.
  - Documentation of Recovery consists of:
    - A positive COVID-19 viral test result performed within the past 90 days
      - **NOTE:** a positive blood test for COVID-19 antibodies is not an allowable substitute for a viral test.
    - AND**
    - A signed letter from a health care provider or public health official clearing the individual for travel.
      - A clearance from isolation letter will also suffice. (The letter is not required to specifically mention travel.).
- **What type of COVID-19 test is accepted for international travel?**
  - A viral test (NAAT <nucleic acid amplification test e.g., PCR> or antigen test) may be used.
  - The test used must be approved for use in the country where the test is performed.
  - Self-tests (aka “home tests”) are acceptable **if they include a telehealth service component**. For details, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html).

#### **For visitors to the US (Inbound)<sup>8</sup>**

- On October 25, 2021, the President issued a proclamation, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an **order to limit entry into the U.S. by air travel for non-U.S. citizens who are non-immigrants who are not fully vaccinated.<sup>6</sup>**
  - Exceptions to this requirement include:
    - Children younger than 18
    - Travelers with documented medical contraindications to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine
      - **NOTE:** Religious and moral objections to the COVID-19 vaccine are not allowable exceptions to vaccination.
    - Travelers on diplomatic or official foreign government business
    - Members of the U.S. Armed Forces, their spouses, and their children under 18
    - People traveling from countries with limited COVID-19 vaccine availability<sup>9</sup>
    - For a full list of exceptions and information about required documentation, etc., see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/proof-of-vaccination.html#noncitizen](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/proof-of-vaccination.html#noncitizen).

<sup>8</sup> This does not apply to US citizens, US nationals, US permanent residents, and individuals applying for immigrant status to the US. It also does not apply to land border crossings or to persons arriving at seaports.

<sup>9</sup> For a current list of countries, see [cdc.gov/quarantine/order-safe-travel/technical-instructions.html#anchor\\_1635183089047](https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/order-safe-travel/technical-instructions.html#anchor_1635183089047)

• **REQUIREMENTS:**

- **Proof of vaccination:** Each visitor boarding a flight to the United States must provide proof of vaccination (with limited exceptions, see above)
  - For details on what constitutes acceptable proof of vaccination, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/proof-of-vaccination.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/proof-of-vaccination.html).
  - **NOTE: A positive blood test for COVID-19 antibodies is not an allowable substitute for proof of vaccination.**
- **Post-arrival requirements for people who are not fully vaccinated and have been granted an exception for entry into the U.S:**
  - They **must** get tested 3-5 days after arrival in the United States and quarantine for a full 7 days.
    - This requirement does not apply to people who can provide proof of having COVID-19 (with recovery) in the past 90 days.
  - People staying in the United States for 60 days or longer are **required** to be fully vaccinated by day 60 of their stay (unless they are too young to be eligible for vaccination).

**For US residents<sup>10</sup> returning to US by air (Inbound)**

• **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Fully vaccinated people** are recommended to get a COVID-19 test 3-5 days after returning to the US.
- **People who are not fully vaccinated** are recommended to:
  - Get a COVID-19 test 3-5 days after returning home from their trip **AND**
  - Self-quarantine for **7 days** after returning home.
  - Even if the test is negative, they should still self-quarantine for a full 7 days.
  - If the test is positive, stay home and isolate.
  - **If no test is done**, self-quarantine for **10 days** after returning home.
  - Avoid being around the following groups of people for 14 days after return from travel, whether or not post-travel testing was done:
    - unvaccinated people who are at high-risk for severe COVID-19
    - immunocompromised people (regardless of their vaccination status)
    - For more information, see *Guidance for People at Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)
- People who have recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days do not need to do post-travel testing or quarantine, as long as they do not have symptoms of COVID-19.

**For US residents traveling out of US (Outbound)**

- **IMPORTANT:** Restrictions for visitors change often. It is important to know what restrictions are in place before planning and departing for international destinations. Be aware of travel restrictions that may be in place prohibiting non-residents from entering or requiring self-quarantine upon entry for visitors.

**Fully vaccinated people:**

- Do not need pre-travel testing or quarantine unless it is required by the destination.

<sup>10</sup> This includes U.S. Citizens, U.S. Nationals, U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents, and persons applying to enter the U.S. as immigrants

- People who tested positive for COVID-19 more than 90 days ago and who are not fully vaccinated should follow directions for **Unvaccinated People**.

### **Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated people**

- Unvaccinated people are recommended to:
  - Get a COVID-19 test 1-3 days before leaving on their trip

### **Domestic travel**

#### **People who are fully vaccinated or who have a history of COVID-19:**

- Fully vaccinated people and people who had COVID-19 within the past 90 days (with recovery) can travel within the United States without the need for pre- or post-travel COVID-19 testing or travel-related quarantine, as long as they do not have symptoms of COVID-19.
  - **NOTE:** People who had COVID-19 **more than 90 days ago** should follow the travel recommendations that match their **vaccination status**.
- Travelers should bring their vaccination card with them while travelling in case documentation is requested and to photograph or upload a retrievable image of the card on their telephone in case their card is misplaced.

#### **People who are not fully vaccinated:**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- People who are not fully vaccinated should:
  - Get a COVID-19 test 1-3 days before leaving on their trip.  
**AND**
  - Get a COVID-19 test 3-5 days after returning home from their trip.  
**AND**
  - Self-quarantine for **7 days** after returning home.
    - Even if the test is negative, they should still self-quarantine for the full 7 days.
    - If the test is positive, stay home and isolate.
    - **If no test is done**, self-quarantine for **10 days** after returning home.
  - Avoid being around the following groups of people for 14 days after returning from travel, whether or not post-travel testing is done:
    - unvaccinated people who are at high-risk for severe COVID-19
    - immunocompromised people (regardless of their vaccination status)
    - For more information, see *Guidance for People at Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

#### **Follow state and local travel restrictions**

- For up-to-date information and travel guidance, check the websites of state or local health departments at home, along your route, and at your planned destination. A list of state and territorial health department websites can be found at [cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html](https://cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html).
- While traveling, it is possible a state or local government may put into place travel restrictions, such as mandated quarantines upon arrival, or even state border closures. Check for updates during your trip.

### **More information for visitors to DC**

- Travel related testing and quarantine recommendations do not apply for visitors coming into DC for less than 24 hours.
- All visitors should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 during their visit.



- If symptoms develop, isolate and get tested.
- If the test returns negative, continue with planned activities.
- If the test is positive, isolate.
- **If a traveler tests positive while in DC**, they should complete their isolation period before traveling home, and any susceptible close contacts should complete a 10-day quarantine.
- Private institutions, such as universities, employers, hotels, hospitals, congregate care facilities, and houses of worship may ask visitors about their recent travel and may require a record of a negative COVID-19 test, proof of vaccination, or proof of COVID-19 within the past 90 days before allowing admittance to their facility.

### **Essential travel to DC**

- People traveling into DC from elsewhere in the United States for essential travel who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or who have not had COVID-19 in the previous 90 days should:
  - Get a COVID-19 test prior to travelling if they have more than 1-week notice of their trip to DC.
  - Limit activities to the primary purpose of their visit and avoid public settings as much as possible.

### **Essential travel includes:**

- Travel related to the provision of, or access to, Essential Activities, Essential Governmental Functions, Essential Businesses, or Minimum Basic Operations, including travel to and from work to operate Essential Businesses or maintain Essential Governmental Functions
- Travel to care for elderly, minors, dependents, persons with disabilities, or other vulnerable persons
- Travel required to visit a house of worship
- Travel to attend a family funeral
- Travel for a family emergency
- Travel to or from educational institutions for purposes of receiving materials for distance learning, for receiving meals, and any other related services
- For those commuting to and from the District for essential activities, travel for residents to return to a place of residence in Washington, DC and for non-residents to return to their place of residence outside Washington, DC
- Travel required by law enforcement or court order
- Travel within the National Capital Region

### **More information for DC residents:**

- Institutions/employers may enforce stricter rules as necessary for a given setting, such as a mandatory quarantine for travelers.
- After returning from travel, unvaccinated or partially vaccinated DC residents who perform essential work can carry out duties and engage in essential activities (e.g., obtaining food, medical care, or medications) prior to receiving results from their post-travel COVID-19 test, unless otherwise indicated by their employer.

### **If a traveler develops symptoms while traveling:**

- **All travelers, regardless of vaccination status or COVID-19 history, should self-monitor before, during and after travel for any symptoms of COVID-19.**
- If a traveler develops symptoms while traveling, they should:
  - Isolate themselves from others.

- Consult with a healthcare provider and seek testing. They should call ahead and let the provider know what symptoms they are having.
- Only leave their lodging for essential purposes, such as seeking healthcare or testing.
- Call 911 (or someone with them should call 911) if they are having a medical emergency, such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent chest pain or pressure, bluish lips or face, confusion, or loss of consciousness.
- Information on options for COVID-19 testing in DC are available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/testing).
- For more information about what to do if diagnosed with COVID-19 see *Guidance for People who Test Positive for COVID-19 and their Household Members* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

### Considerations for safer travel

- **All travelers, regardless of vaccination status or personal history of COVID-19, should:**
  - Consider whether the risks of travel outweigh the benefit of the travel for themselves and others.
    - Travel is especially risky for people at higher risk for severe COVID-19 who are not fully vaccinated, and immunocompromised people (regardless of their vaccination status). These individuals should be especially cautious.
    - If COVID-19 is spreading at their destination, they can get infected while traveling and spread it to susceptible members of their household when they return.
    - If COVID-19 is still spreading in their community and they are not fully vaccinated, they can potentially spread the virus to others while traveling, even if they don't have symptoms.
- Visit the CDC *Travel Recommendations by Destination* website ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html)) to get important information about COVID-19 restrictions by destination before traveling.

### **Safer travel for people who are not fully vaccinated and immunocompromised people:**

- Activities during travel will greatly affect risk. In general, outside activities are safer than indoor activities. Small group activities involving only your household members or where all other participants are fully vaccinated are safer than activities involving an assortment of people from many households.
- **Travel by private vehicle is safest and is strongly encouraged whenever possible.**
  - Safer: short road trips with members of one's own household
  - Less safe: Longer trips with many stops along the way
    - Making stops along the way for gas, food, or bathroom breaks can put travelers in close contact with other people.
- Air travel: Air travel requires spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which can bring travelers in close contact with other people. However, social distancing is difficult on crowded flights, and travelers may have to sit near people they don't know (within 6 feet), sometimes for hours, increasing risk of exposure to COVID-19.
  - Safer: flights with no stops or layovers
  - Less safe: flights with multiple legs or layovers
- Bus or train travel: Traveling on buses or trains for any length of time can involve sitting or standing within 6 feet of others.
  - **AVOID**: long distance bus or train trips
- For more information about other everyday prevention measures that can be followed to

make travel safer, please see *Guidance for People who are not Fully Vaccinated or Immunocompromised* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

**Anticipate travel needs to decrease exposures**

- If you take medication, bring enough with you for the entire trip.
- Pack alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) and keep it handy.
- Bring a supply of masks to wear on the trip.

These recommendations will continue to be updated. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov) regularly for the most current information.